

HUMAN RESOURCES INVESTMENT COUNCIL

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, January 27, 2003

Woodbury College

Members Present: Tom Leever Chair, Philippe Bourg, Jerry Brown, Jim Bruce, Frank Cioffi, Diane Davis, Neil Gruber, Phil Hammerslough, Peter Kreisel, Stephen Marsh, John O’Kane, Jim Rude, Dr. John Evans, Anne Ginevan, Diane Dalmasse, Chuck Stander, Carolyn Kehler, Ron Rabideau, Roy Vestrich, Tom Whitney, Hal Cohen, Representative Val Vincent, Senator Sara Kittell, Betsy Bishop, Jan Marinelli, Bob Ware, Robin Morton, Pixie Hankinson, Bill Cormany, Al Gaisor, Spike Wellman, Rod Weston and Rita Phelps

Staff Present: Chip Evans, Executive Director, Suzanne Masland, Assistant Director and Denise Bergeron, Administrative Assistant

WELCOME:

Tom Leever, Chair, opened the meeting at 1pm and welcomed the members. Tom introduced and welcomed the new members of the Council, Peter Kreisel of LLC in South Burlington, Neil Gruber of Helen Porter Healthcare and Rehabilitation Center in Middlebury, and Stephen Marsh of Community Bank in Derby. Larry Mandell, President of Woodbury College also welcomed members and thanked them for using Woodbury College as their meeting location. Larry reported that Woodbury College began with Department of Employment and Training Funds formerly known as CETA many years ago, and currently offers a wide range of career focused programs, a dispute resolution center, and provides training services to businesses.

HRIC Strategic Plan - Discussion and endorsement of final draft:

Chip handed out a revised draft of the HRIC Strategic Plan for discussion. The Plan is a tool to guide our work and communicate our role to the public. It lays out specific goals and actions and identifies the work partner agencies will do to improve the workforce education and training system. The intersections with the work of VEPC, DOE, The Douglas Vision and others are identified within the Plan. The main goals of the Strategic Plan are to benefit individual Vermonters, Vermont businesses, and the overall economy of the State.

Member involvement – Tom asked the members to let Chip know if there is a particular area of the Plan that they are interested in working on. Tom pointed out that the Strategic Plan also includes performance indicators. Chip informed the Council that indicators number fewer than 20 now, down from 50 that were identified as possibilities. Chip informed the Council that Vermont is now a “Wage-Reporting State” meaning that employment status can now be tracked using Social Security numbers. This means that DET can track student employment outcomes, including the type of employer and wages, of various

education and training programs, even if the individual moves out of state. With this system, data is always presented in the aggregate so that individual confidentiality is respected. The Vermont State Colleges have initiated a pilot study with DET for a set of graduates that should be available later this year. This data source can be extremely valuable as a way to track the effectiveness of workforce education and training investments

The group agreed that the Strategic Plan is ready to be circulated to the WIBs for final input before being published. Chip will do this, incorporate any additions or changes, and bring the Plan to the Executive Committee for final review before publishing.

VT Economic Progress Council Plan:

Fred Kenney was scheduled to discuss workforce development as part of the larger economic development strategies proposed in the recently released VEPC plan. Chip informed the Council that Fred Kenney could not be here today due to a personal emergency. Chip provided some background information, stating that the HRIC was created one year before Vermont Economic Progress Council. The intention was for VEPC to lay out the long-term development plan for the State, and for the HRIC to address the workforce implications of that plan. Chip worked closely on the portions of the VEPC plan that address workforce education and training, and drafts were reviewed by the HRIC Executive Committee. The Vermont Economic Progress Council Plan can be viewed on-line at www.thinkvermont.com/vepc/

H-1B Grant Updates :

Implementation of current grant - Bill Cormany described the H-1B Grants to the Council. These Grants provide funds to train Americans for hard to fill jobs in Healthcare and Information Technology. H-1B grants come from a federal fund that is supported by fees that employers pay to bring skilled workers into the US from other countries. Companies pay \$1,000 when they bring these workers in and these funds are made available to States through their State WIBs (HRIC) to train US citizens for these jobs. Part of the fee goes to the National Science Foundation and another part to the Department of Labor. Bill Cormany and Greg Voorheis at DET are the lead grant writers for these H-1B projects and have been quite successful in bringing these very competitive grants to Vermont. Vermont's first H-1B Grant ends in November of '03. It trained 103 Registered Nurses and 380 preceptor - nurse educators. Vermont Technical College also used part of this grant to train thirty-five electrical engineers who will receive their Associate Degrees. The second H-1B Grant, awarded in January for \$2.9 million, focuses on career ladders that lead to specialty areas in healthcare and information technology. Sub grantees also include Champlain College, VTC, IBM, and a consortium of Vermont Hospitals.

WET Consortium - Overview and Council endorsement of final report:

Chip explained the WET Consortium Plan and shared the final report with them. Chip explained that the WET group has identified a number of specific program improvement strategies that will improve

services to individuals and businesses. Jerry Brown pointed out that while the activities in the Plan are good it should not be confused with or presented as a strategic plan for the workforce development system. It is an operational plan that outlines new and innovative partnerships between a number of publicly funded programs. The Council congratulated the members on their work and endorsed the plan. Tom commented that the Council looks forward to the implementation of the activities identified in the plan and suggested that given State fiscal constraints the Consortium should focus first on items that can be implemented within existing budgets.

Tech Ed Study - Progress report, discussion, and next steps :

Results of HRIC meeting with the State Board of Education - Chuck Stander circulated a handout to the members titled, "Summary of the Report to the 2003 Legislature On Career & Technical Education of the Vermont State Board of Education". Chuck provided a summary of key parts of the Plan; Mission - The Department of Education believes that students in high school are ready and able to choose career pathways, and that the option to pursue Technical Education in the 11th and 12th grades should be more broadly available. Post-secondary education, though not necessarily college, is needed for most employment choices, and particularly for those that pay a livable wage or above. Enrollment trends and economic forces indicate that Technical Centers will play an increasingly significant role in public education, however he suggested that the solution to increasing access to these programs goes beyond bricks and mortar. Chuck proposed that we need to expand our notion of what can high schools offer at their own sites. We also need to reach students earlier with career information and not wait until 11th grade when many options are already precluded. He pointed out that most tech centers are at capacity now, so even if Tech Ed programs at high schools are expanded, additional capacity at the centers will be also required.

Chip reminded the members that although the Legislature charged the Department of Education with drafting the report they were instructed to consult with the HRIC. Chip explained that the Council had numerous opportunities for input and commended Department of Education staff on the report. To view the complete Tech Ed Study online please visit - www.vermontcareers.org. (Click on "What's New")

Governor's proposed budget for HRIC/WIB's and general workforce activities :

Betsy Bishop gave a brief update from the Governor's office. She said that Governor Douglas values the HRIC's advice and he is interested in the Council's work. In the Plan for Prosperity written in September, he states that workforce training and job creation is a top priority. Anne Ginevan will be very instrumental in building training opportunities. The Governor has put in resources for the WET Fund into his '04 budget request. Tom informed the members that \$435,000 was recommended by the Governor for the WET Fund. A question was raised regarding the health of the WIB's and difficulty with keeping staff. Anne responded that it is difficult to operate a WIB for \$11,000 a year. Most WIB's have a part-time person working through a local organization such as a Chamber or Regional Development Corporation

where there is a sense of a shared mission. Chip pointed out that some WIB staff turnover has occurred in the past year, however the skills and experience of the individuals the WIBs have employed is remarkable. The part-time nature of the work often hastens staff turnover, however just as often, the WIB Coordinators have other work as consultants or their jobs are part of their position at a Chamber or RDC. Over the past year three WIB Coordinators have left their jobs for a turnover rate of 25%.

In discussion, it was agreed that strong WIB's are more important than ever. Tom Leever commented that the HRIC should continually look at the more successful WIB's, identify what is successful and replicate it. Chip pointed out that Suzanne Masland spends the majority of her time working directly with the WIBs and that the feedback on this assistance from the WIBs is overwhelmingly positive. Her part-time status has limited what she can accomplish, and it would be desirable to increase her hours. The Randolph WIB has agreed to re-assignment of its territory to the Central Vermont and Upper Valley WIBs. Chip reported that in addition to the State Grant each WIB has received or will receive \$9,000 in Grant Funds to work on improving services to individuals with disabilities and re-entering offenders. Chip asked members to speak to their Senators and Representatives in support of increased resources for the WIB's.

WIA 2002 Performance Outcomes:

Department of Employment and Training - Chip reminded the Council that the HRIC has important specific responsibilities for WIA Title I Programs. Bob Ware of the Department of Employment and Training reported that there are four major WIA populations for which performance is measured. Vermont met or exceeded the goals for Adults, Dislocated workers and Younger Youth, but for Older Youth (the 18-20 year olds) we fell significantly short of our plan. Bob reported that we helped participants find jobs but they did not keep the jobs long enough and the wage gains were below the goal as well, with these participants showing only \$940 in earnings gain last year. He believes that this occurred because we did not track carefully enough what was going on in time to take corrective action. Bob reported that DET has instituted quarterly reports from the districts to resolve this problem and to provide timely management data. Bob reported that DET's staff will work hard to meet the goals this year. Barriers with these youth aged 18 to 21 are significant and include such things as substance abuse and homelessness, making this a particularly difficult challenge. He reported that DET plans to reduce the summer youth program to free up resources to fully support and follow-up with the older youth. Jan Marinelli of Senator Jefford's office pointed out that the WIA was tailored to Vermont and the Department of Labor needs to be made aware of any problems in the reporting system. She commented that dialogue with Washington right now is critical. A planned visit to Vermont by Sherry Kaiman of Senator James Jeffords office will provide an opportunity to address any issues through WIA Reauthorization. Chip will convene the partner agencies and identify issues in advance of Sherry's visit.

Department of Education - Chuck Stander reported that the Department of Education is putting together a report now. Among their indicators, Secondary programs are on target but Post-Secondary providers missed their goals for non-traditional enrollments, job placement and retention. The Department

of Education will be addressing these issues directly with the WIA funded Colleges, VTC, CCV and Champlain, and expects that these performance issues can be addressed this year.

Public Comment:

Tom asked for comments from the public. Pixie Hankinson of Vermont Adult Learning, distributed copies of booklets titled, "Rising to the Literacy Challenge". Pixie quoted Con Hogan as saying, "the most at risk youth do not graduate and often end up in a correctional facility". She commented that this connection between education and down-stream costs needs to be better understood and appreciated.

Adjournment:

The meeting adjourned at 4:30pm.